A

SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN

AT

WHITE-HALL,

On Sunday,

MARCH 22. 169⅞.

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James 2. 10.

For whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.

THERE are several Passages of our *Saviour* and his *Apostles*, which at the first hearing do sound very harshly, and seem to savour of over-great Severity, that upon due Consideration are found to have nothing in them,

but what is highly Reasonable. To omit others, *this Text* is one of those Passages; and many, no doubt, have been startled at it, and been ready to say as the Disciples of our Saviour did upon another Occasion, *This is an hard saying, who can hear it?* For can this Doctrine be true, that *whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, is guilty of all*, and we be in the mean time dealt with according to the Gentleness and Clemency of a Covenant of Grace? Is this the GOSPEL we talk so much of? Is this the *Glad-Tydings* which our Saviour hath brought us? We find none so *bad*, we read nothing so *sad*, in all the *Old* Testament. The *worst* Passage *there* is, and that is *bad enough*, *Cursed is he that continueth not, in all that is written in the Law to do it.* It is no where *there* said, that *he* who is never so careful to observe the *whole Law*, if he chance to transgress in any *one* Point, shall be look't upon as a Transgressour of *all the* Commandments, and dealt with like such a one. That *other* Saying is a very terrible one, but *this* is much *more* terrible.

If this be so, we may well Repeat *that other Question* of the *Disciples*, *Who then can be saved?*

saved? In many things we offend all; if therefore he *who keepeth the whole Law, and yet offends in one Point, be guilty of all*, how Desperate must the Case not onely of the *Generality* needs be, but of every *Individual* Person?

I must confess that *these Words* may well Confound us, and fill us with Amazement, were they to be understood in the severest Sense they are capable of; but we are certain they are not so to be understood; and therefore that the fore-mentioned Paraphrase upon them, is by no means a *true* one: And the Context sheweth, that *this* is the plain Meaning of them, *viz. Upon Supposition that a Man were careful to observe all the Laws of God but one*, his living *in the Breach of that* one, *shall be so far from being connived at upon the Account of his Obedience to all the rest, that he shall be lyable to the Punishment which is due to the Transgression of the* whole Law: That is, the same Punishment for *kind*, not for *degree*; there being nothing more plainly revealed, than that the *more* and the *greater* Sins Men are guilty of, the *greater* and *severer* shall be their Punishment. And in saying that such a one shall have the same Punishment for *kind*, I mean that which consisteth in being forever

forever Baniſhed from the Preſence of God; and which is called *Eternal Death.*

Now the *Reaſonableneſs* of this Aſſertion of our Apoſtle, *thus* underſtood, may be fully made to appear by theſe following Conſiderations.

Firſt, He who refuſeth Obedience to any *One* of the Divine Laws, may as truly be ſaid to Contemn the Divine Authority, as if he lived in the breach of *all.* Men in wilfully Diſobeying any *One* Law, do put as *true* an Affront upon the Law-Giver, tho' not ſo *High* a one, as they do in Diſobeying *all.* This Reaſon St. *James* gives in the Words next following, for what he affirms in the *Text*: *For he that ſaid, do not Commit Adultery, ſaid alſo do not Kill; now if thou Commit no Adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a Tranſgreſſour of the Law.* That is, it is the *ſame* Law-Giver who hath forbidden *Adultery* and *Murther*; and His Authority is as truly Contemned in Tranſgreſſing *one*, as *both* of theſe Laws.

Every *deliberate* Act of Diſobedience is flat *Rebellion*; and ſo far forth a Renouncing of God's *right* to Govern us; It is a *virtual* denial of His Authority to Preſcribe *any* Laws

to

to us, and lays a foundation for *Universal* Disobedience. For if God Almighty's Soveraignty be Disacknowledg'd in any *One* Instance, it may as well be so in *all other*. The *same* Reason that leads to the Violation of *one* Law, doth Enervate and render invalid *all other* Laws. Again,

Secondly, He who *willfully* Disobeys any *One* of the Divine Laws, is no *Sincere* Observer of any of the rest. For whosoever allows himself in any one Act of Disobedience, hath no *True Love* either for God or Goodness; but it is necessary to the *Sincerity* of Obedience, that it proceed from *that* Love which hath both these for its Objects. That it proceed from Love to *God*, and (which is indeed *Materially* the same) Love to *Goodness*: *Goodness* (Or Universal Righteousness, Purity and Benignity) being *that* upon the account of which God Almighty is a *Lovely* Being.

Now it is Evident, that those who live in any *Disobedience* to God, do not *Love* Him. They love him not according to the *Scripture-Notion* of Loving God; because whatsoever that is for the *sake* of which we can find in our hearts to *Disobey* Him, must needs be valued and

Eſteemed above Him; And the *Scripture-Notion* of Loving God, is the Eſteeming Him above, and Preferring Him before all *Creatures.* He who hath *No* true Love for God, may *Obey* Him in many inſtances, as the poor *Pagans* Worſhip the *Devil*, out of a *Slaviſh* Fear and Dread of Him; He may Obey him too as a meer Mercenary, I mean, for the good things of *this* Life, and a *Senſual* kind of Happineſs in the *Other*: But *this* Obedience is far from being *Genuine*, or the true *Evangelical* Obedience, as is Eaſy to ſhew.

And again, it is no leſs apparent, that the Love of *Virtue* and true *Goodneſs*, is inconſiſtent with harbouring any thing in our breaſts that is *contrary* there to.

Thirdly, He who lives in diſobedience to any *One* Law of God, as he Obeys none *Sincerely*, ſo is he *prepared* to *break* all other Laws, and that in the *groſſeſt* manner, whenſoever forceable Temptations may aſſault him. For if the Divine Authority can't prevail with a Man, to Abſtain from *this* or *that* Sin, how is it to be Expected it ſhould Reſtrain him from *Other* Sins, when he may happen to be incited to them by *alike* ſtrong and Violent Temptations? Such

Such a one may forbear not a *few* ſins while he is not *at all*, or not very *violently* ſet upon by a tempter; but if God ſhould once ſuffer him to be ſharply encountred, either from *without* or from *within*, it is not hard to divine what Succeſs ſuch Temptations would have upon him.

Hazael once thought that 'twas impoſſible he ſhould incurr the Guilt of ſuch horrid Villanies, as he was *foretold* he would; ſuch as *daſhing young Children againſt the ſtones*, and *ripping up Women with Child*: *What*, replyed he to the Prophet, *Is thy Servant a Dog, that he ſhould do ſuch things?* But *for all* that, when he came into other Circumſtances, and ſo to have ſuch Temptations, as he never before met with, he *was* ſuch a *Dog* as to commit ſuch Barbarities.

And if we will not be prevailed with, to forſake in Will and Affection *every* Sin, we ſhall ſcarcely ſtick longer at *any* Sin, than our forbearance thereof is conſiſtent with the Satisfaction of that Luſt which is *deareſt* to us.

We have *Judas* alſo for an Example of *this*: He was doubtleſs, as to *Outward Appearance*, a very Moral Inoffenſive Man; for our Saviour would not have given ſuch Scandal, as

to have taken him, had he *not* been ſo, into the Number of his Conſtant Aſſociates; yet *this* Judas *loving the Bag*, being a ſecretly-*Covetous* Wretch, could perſwade himſelf, even *moſt baſely to betray his Bleſſed Maſter*, when allured by the Bait of *Gain* to it; and *that* a very *ſorry* Bait too.

Fourthly, Whoſoever makes no Conſcience of tranſgreſſing ſome *one* Law, as he is *Prepared* to break *all other* upon ſtrong Temptations, ſo he *actually* diſobeys other Laws, according to that *Latitude* of Interpretation which our Lord hath given them; and which *ought* to be given them. Such a one may *tremble* at the Thoughts of breaking thoſe two Commandments, *Thou ſhalt not commit Adultery*, *Thou ſhalt not kill*; but *Luſting in his Heart*, or *Hating his Enemy*, will be *Venial* Sins with him, though his Saviour hath told him, that *theſe* are Tranſgreſſions of thoſe Commandments.

This Man may *punctually* keep the *Firſt* and *Second* Commandments, as to the ſhunning of thoſe Sins, which in *expreſs* terms are forbidden by them: He may abhorr to acknowledge any other God but *Jehovah*: he may abominate *Graven Images* in the Worſhip of God; but while he preferreth the World, either

either the Riches, or Honours, or Pleaſures thereof, before God (as whoſoever lives in the Allowance of any known Sin *doth*) he is a very *Idolater*, as the *Apoſtle* hath told us.

Fifthly, Living in the Breach of but *one* Law, would as truly *Deprave* Mens Natures, and make them *unmeet* for the Enjoyment of God, as living in the Breach of *all*. It would do ſo as *truly* and *really*, though not in the ſame *degree*. One Sin *allowed*, one Luſt *cheriſhed*, robs the Soul of the Divine Image, renders it unlike to God, and conſequently makes it uncapable of taking Satisfaction or Complacency in that *Beſt* of Beings, who is pure *Light*, and in whom is *no Darkneſs at all*. It is thereby unqualified for the *Heavenly*, and it ſinks it down into the *Helliſh* State. We ſay, *One Leak will ſink a Ship as ſure as a Thouſand*: And, upon this Account, *One* Sin entertained, muſt needs as certainly ruine our Souls, if we will not part with it, as *never ſo many*. Our *Four Firſt* Conſiderations make it highly Reaſonable that it ſhould be ſo, but this *Laſt* makes it Neceſſary. Neceſſary from the very *Nature* of the thing; not only, nor yet *Primarily*, from the *Will* of God.

I ſhall

I ſhall now Preſent you with Several plain *Inferences* from what hath been ſaid. As,

1. THat we ought not to account *any* Sin a Light or a ſmall thing; ſuch a thing as God Almighty will not Concern Himſelf about: Such a thing as we may *allow* our ſelves in, and yet be Objects of the Divine Favour.

This is Evident from what we have ſaid; or rather is our *Text it ſelf* in other Words.

But I add, for the farther Clearing of the Truth hereof, that *that* Sin which we are apt to Fancy ſo Light a matter, is either a Trangreſſion of God's Law or 'tis not; if it be *not*, we may not acknowledge it to be a *Sin*: For *Sin*, as ſaith the Apoſtle, *is the Tranſgreſſion of the Law; and where there is no Law there is no Tranſgreſſion.* But if it *be* a Tranſgreſſion of the Law, *how* can it be a Light or a Trivial thing? If it be *really* ſo, then muſt *God* needs ſo account it, for *He* judges of things as they *are*; but how can God ſo account it, when He hath made a *Law* againſt it? Will His Infinite Wiſdom ſuffer Him to make a Law, which He matters not whether

it

it be *Obſerv'd* or no? *Such* a Law would be a very Vain and Needleſs one, and therefore cannot be of *God's* making. No Wiſe *Man* would be the Maker of *ſuch* a Law.

But becauſe *ſome* Sins are *accounted* ſmall and *others* Great, *this* Diſtinction is not to be *born*, except we mean, that ſome Sins are ſmall ones in *Compariſon* of others; not that any are *abſolutely* and in *themſelves* ſmall.

Indeed Conſidering Sins *as Tranſgreſſions of God's Law*, ſo all are *alike*; for *one* Sin is not more contrary to the *Law* than *another*: All are as Contrary to the *Law* as *can* be. That *Stoical* Paradox Ὅτι ἴσα τὰ ἁμαρτήματα, *All Sins are Equal*, *Tully* gives *this* true Explication of: *Parva inquis* Res *eſt*, *at Magna* Culpa; *Thou ſayeſt this is but a ſmall* thing, *but I ſay 'tis a Great* fault: *in quo peccatur*, *id poteſt eſſe aliud alio majus aut minus*; *That* in *which a Man Offends*, *may be a greater or a leſs thing*: *ipſum autem* Peccare, *quoquo te verteris unum eſt. But the* Offending (the Sinning) *it ſelf*, *is ever one and the ſame thing*. And *this* amounts to what was *now* ſaid, That conſidering Sins, *as Tranſgreſſions of the Divine Laws*, ſo all are *alike*: But conſidering them according to various *Circumſtances*, ſome may be *Comparatively* ſmall, or much *leſs* than others.

Some

Some are committed with leſs of the *Will* than others; and thoſe, Men fall into upon a Surprize, and before they are aware, are nothing ſo great in *that* reſpect, as thoſe which are committed with Deliberation. I mean upon Suppoſition, that a naughty *Cuſtom* doth not occaſion the Inadvertency. There are *thoſe* who profane the Sacred Name of God by raſh *Oaths*, and by taking it into their Mouths *lightly* and *wantonly*, and (when reproved) profeſs they were not *aware* they did ſo: But this is no Extenuation of their Fault, becauſe ſuch inſenſibility can proceed from no other Cauſe, than Mens having acquired a wretched *Habit* of ſo making bold with and abuſing God's Name, through their Minds being void of any awful Senſe of His Glorious Majeſty.

Some Sins are committed againſt leſs *Light* and *Knowledge* than others; and Sins againſt greater *actual* Knowledge, or better *Means* of Knowledge, are in *that* reſpect the *Greater* Sins; and therefore our Lord hath aſſigned the greater *Puniſhment* to them, *Mat.* 10. 15.

The greater *Obligations*, and the more *Mercies* Men ſin againſt, the greater are their Sins upon that Account. The more of Diſingenuity

Diſingenuity and hateful Ingratitude there is in ſins, the more Hainous and Provoking are they.

Sins are greater or leſs, according as the *Effects* of them are more or leſs miſchievous. Thoſe which injure our ſelves *onely*, are not in *that* reſpect ſo great, as thoſe which injure our Neighbour together with our ſelves. And thoſe which are injurious to our Neighbours *Souls*, are the greateſt that can be committed againſt *them*. Thoſe which are miſchievous to the *Community* are as *ſuch*, much greater than thoſe which are ſo only to *Particular* Perſons.

The worſe *End* a Man hath in a Sin, the *greater* is it. The more of ill-Nature, and a Vile Deviliſh Temper is in a Sin, the more *exceedingly Sinful* 'tis.

Thoſe which are Tranſgreſſions of the *Rules of everlaſting Righteouſs*, are greater as *ſuch*, than thoſe which are onely Tranſgreſſions of *Poſitive* Precepts. The *former* are more *intenſively* Evil; they are Evil not onely as Violations of a *declared Law*, but there is alſo Turpitude and Malignity in the *Matter* of them: Which Malignity is the *Reaſon* of the Law againſt them. And of *this* Nature are gene-

rally those things which are forbidden in the Gospel of our Saviour.

And to *these* may be added *other* Instances. But though upon *these* and *other* Accounts, some sins are *less* than others, yet (as hath been sufficiently proved) it is impossible that *any* Sin should be *Simply*, and in *it self* Little.

Which, by the way, is a sufficient Confutation of that dangerous Doctrine of the Church of *Rome*; That there are a sort of Sins which are Venial *in their own Nature*, and that cannot put us out of God's Favour, tho' committed never so *frequently* or *deliberately*.

II. What hath been said may serve to Vindicate our *Saviour's* Dealing with the *Young Man in the Gospel*, from being too severe. Such as are apt to pass hasty Judgment upon the Actions of others, without duely considering the Reasons of them, may be apt in reading *that* Story, not only to Pity the young Man, but to *take his Part*: As thinking him too hardly dealt with, in not being accepted for his having Observed the *Ten Commandments* even from his Childhood, but having such *farther* Terms impos'd upon him, as forced him to go away sorrowful.

Surely,

Surely, may ſuch ſay, our Lord was utterly averſe to the beſtowing of Eternal Life upon *this poor Man*. It is ſaid, *Bleſſed are they that do his Commandments, for they ſhall have Right unto the Tree of Life*, but *here* is one who muſt be *excepted*, ſince Obedience to the *Whole LAW*, and *that* of ſo long a ſtanding too, might ſignifie nothing to the intitling of him thereunto. Nay our Lord did at *firſt* plainly intimate to him, that *keeping the Commandments* ſhould be *all* he would expect from him; for ſaid he, *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments*: But when he had replyed that *this* he was not to *begin* to do *now*, but had *ever* done it, then was *more* required of him; and that no *leſs* than the *Selling*, and having ſold, the *giving away* his whole Eſtate; which was very great. It ſeems as *freely* as *Eternal Life* was offered to Others, *this* Man muſt *Buy* it, and that with no *leſs* a Sum, than the Price of *all* he had.

But we are to take Notice, that our Bleſſed Saviour deſigned to *Try* him by *this* Injunction, whether he *really* was, as he *thought* himſelf, Univerſally Obedient; and it ſeems to be ſuch another Command as *that* of God Almighty to His Servant *Abraham*, for the *Of-*

fering of his onely Son *Iſaac*. But as *Abraham* by his *readineſs* to obey that Command, demonſtrated the Sincerity of his Love to God, as God Himſelf told him, ſo *this Young Man* by his *Unwillingneſs* to Obey *this* Command, gave as great a Demonſtration of his having been nothing *leſs*, than a ſincere Obſerver of all God's Commandments. In ſhort, he was by this Means Convicted of wretched *Covetouſneſs*; in that, as deſirous as he was of Eternal Life, he preferred his Temporal Eſtate before it.

That our Saviour did not thus treat him out of *Prejudice* to his Perſon, and with a deſign to affright him from Him, is plain from what we find in this Narrative, as St. *Mark* relates it. 'Tis ſaid, *Ch.* 10 21. upon his telling him that he had obſerved all the Commandments *from his Youth*, that *Jeſus loved him*. Now it is very Clear from our paſt Diſcourſe, that there was great *Reaſon*, why this *Young Man*, as *good* as he was, ſhould be ſent away ſorrowful, ſince he was no *better*. For though he was no *Murtherer*, nor *Adulterer*, nor *Thief*, &c. in the *groſs* Senſe, yet he might be *all theſe*, according to the *Spiritual* Senſe and Meaning of the Law; for 'tis

'tis certain that in *this* ſenſe he was an *Idolater*, in that the *World* lay deepeſt in his Affections, and was eſteemed above *GOD*, and *Eternal Life*.

III. I infer from what hath been ſaid, what a great Weakneſs it is in any Man to hope for Salvation, becauſe he perceives that there are *many* who are *far greater* Sinners *than* himſelf; when yet he lives in the wilful Commiſſion of ſome known *Sins*, or in the wilful Neglect of ſome known *Duties*.

I doubt there are too many, who becauſe they are not *Drunkards*, nor *Unclean* Perſons, nor *Profane Swearers*, &c. as they ſee Multitudes are, do fancy *all to be well* with them, though they are conſcious to themſelves of being *faulty*, and that *wilfully* too, in *other* reſpects. They can poſſibly *over-reach* their Brother, when they can do it *ſlyly*; or if they ſtick at *plain Injuſtice*, they can do *Hard* things; which will be found another day to be *Unjuſt* alſo, and which thoſe know to be ſo *now*, who take their Meaſures of Right and Wrong from their Saviour's Golden Rule, *Matth.* 7. 12. They can make an Idol of the World, are inamoured with either the *Riches*, or *Honours*, or *Pleaſures* thereof; if not with *all*, yet with *one* or *other* of theſe, and

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are with great difficulty drawn to Works of Mercy and Charity.

Some ſeem mightily *Devout*, and Zealous for the Duties of the *Firſt Table*, and therefore take themſelves for good Chriſtians, tho' they are as Remiſs in Reference to divers Duties of the *Second*. Others again are ſeemingly very Obſervant of thoſe of the *Second Table*, are *Sober*, *Orderly*, *Governable*, *good Subjects*, *quiet and inoffenſive Neighbours*; when perhaps they are as Culpable in Relation to the Duties of the *Firſt*: Live under little Senſe of God, of their Dependance on Him, and their Obligations to Him: Worſhip Him with their *Bodies*, when their *Hearts* are far from Him; and content themſelves with a meer *External*, tho' not with a meer *Ritual Righteouſneſs*.

But why ſhould any of us think our ſelves in a Good State, becauſe we live not in any of the *Scandalous* Sins? Were not thoſe Laws made to be *Obeyed* which we Break, as well as thoſe we Keep, or at leaſt *think* we Keep? And, if ſo, how can we Expect God's Favour, and live in ſuch Contradiction to His Will? Will you approve of that Servant who wilfully Diſobeys *ſome* of your Commands,

mands, becauſe he obſerves *others*? No ſurely, *all* Maſters will Expect to be in *every* thing obeyed; or at leaſt that their Servants ſhould *endeavour* to obey them in all things.

God will ſay another day to the Partially Obedient, *Theſe things ought you to have done, and not to have left the other undone.*

But *how* came it to be ever imagined, that God will be put off with a *Partiall* Obedience? The miſchief is, thoſe who live not in *Open* Sins, the world, not ſeeing farther, hath a good Opinion of them; and therefore they will pleaſe themſelves with a Conceit, that God Almighty hath the *ſame*. Or it may be their own Party will *applaud* thoſe things in them, which are far from being Praiſe-worthy. But *let us not be deceived, God is not mocked*, as *men* are; nor will *He* flatter us as *men* do. Let no man deceive us, nor let us deceive *our ſelves* with vain words or thoughts; for, for the ſake of whatſoever Sins we will not *part* with, be they what they will, the wrath of God will fall upon us, except it be diverted by timely Repentance; that is, by timely Reformation.

Was

Was the *Phariſee* accepted of God, becauſe he could ſay, *God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, Extortioners, Unjuſt, Adulterers, or even as this Publican*? We know he was not; for tho' he was free from the Sins of many *others*, yet was he a *Phariſee* ſtill: There were Secret and leſs Obſerved Sins, which he allowed himſelf in; and therefore that *Publican* he ſo deſpiſed, being a true *Penitent*, *went away Juſtified before him.*

IV. Methinks thoſe who make *none*, or but very *little*, Conſcience of their ways, and dare to live in *open* Sins, ſhould not be able to forbear being mightily Concerned at what hath been ſaid. For as the *Apoſtle* ſaith, *If the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved* (or have ſuch a Portion of Miſery in *this* life) *where ſhall the Wicked and Ungodly appear? We* may ſay, if thoſe who are *ſeemingly* Righteous, or have a regard to *moſt* of God's Laws, not heartily Endeavouring to Obey them *all*, ſhall fall ſhort of Salvation, what ſhall become of ſuch as are *apparently*, and in the Eye of the *World*, Wicked and Ungodly? Prophane and Debauched people, are *Univerſally* acknowledged to be Objects of the Divine diſpleaſure; and therefore whatſoever

ever *vain* hopes thoſe, who are not guilty of the Crimes which ſpeak men *ſuch*, may have of the goodneſs of their State, one would preſume that *theſe* could have *no* Temptation to hope well of themſelves, while they Continue impenitent and Unreformed.

Some mens Sins, ſaith St. *Paul*, *are Open before hand, going before to judgment; and ſome, they follow after.* Some mens Sins are ſo Conſpicuous, that they may be pronounc't to be *in the gall of bitterneſs and bond of iniquity*, in *this* life: The Sins of *others* are more *ſecret*, the judgment of whom is to be reſerved to the Great Day. 1 *Tim.* 5. 24.

But alas, ſuch is the nature of *Sin*, that the Greateſt *Sinners* are *leaſt* Senſible of their Danger. None ſhall be more forward than *they*, to perſwade themſelves of God's Pardon; Eſpecially if after a *Wretched* life they can but make a *good* End, as the Phraſe is; that is, be ſorry for their Sins, for fear of Hell, when they can Sin no longer, and Call upon their Saviour at the laſt Gaſp. But if the Hopes of a man who can't be prevailed with, to be intirely Obedient, be Vain and Groundleſs, then the Hopes of ſuch Sinners as *theſe*, muſt needs be (do I ſay *vain* too? they muſt be) *Mad* Hopes.

Job, 27. 8. *What is the Hope of the Hypocrite, when God taketh away his Soul?* Said Upright *Job*: And therefore what Hope can thoſe have, who to *that* time have lived *diſſolutely*, and been *Open* Violators of Gods Laws?

And now I ſhall ſhut up this Diſcourſe, with ſeriouſly Applying my ſelf to *thoſe*, who dare not *run* with the now mentioned ſort of Sinners *to their Exceſs of Riot*, but yet Harbour in their Breaſts ſome *Secret* Sins ſtill. I beſeech you think *well* of the words of our *Text*, which taken in the moſt *Candid* Senſe may well ſcare *You* alſo; may throughly Convince you of the Abſolute Neceſſity of Intire Obedience. And that you may be effectually perſwaded of it:

Firſt, Conſider how wonderfully you are Obliged to your infinitely Good God, in that He hath, through Chriſt, declared Himſelf ſo Exceedingly willing, to pardon all Sins not *allowed* and *liv'd* in. Can you be ſo Fooliſh and Ill-natured, as *thus to requite the Lord?*

Is it not matter of Unſpeakable Thankfulneſs, that God will be Reconciled to Sinners upon any Terms *poſſible*, and can we deſire He ſhould be, upon more *Reaſonable* Terms?

Terms? *If thou Lord ſhouldſt mark iniquities, O Lord who ſhall ſtand? But there is forgiveneſs with Thee, that thou maiſt be feared.* This is the uſe we ought to make of the goodneſs of God, and His readineſs to forgive; and 'tis an Argument of an intolerably bad Temper, not to be induced to fear to Offend Him, by the Conſideration hereof. *Pſal.* 130. 3, 4.

Seeing God is pleaſed to aſſure us of His Pardon thro' the Sacrifice of His Son, ſo we will do what lyeth in us for the *time to come* to pleaſe Him, He is as Gracious to us as we can *Reaſonably wiſh* He would be. With what *Face* then can we deſire to perſiſt longer in any one inſtance of Diſobedience?

There is no Honeſt Soul, but thinks it extremely too much, that He ſometimes Tranſgreſſeth *againſt his will*, and before he is *aware*, and his Weakneſſes and Infirmities do very heartily afflict him; then ſurely if we are *Sincere*, we ſhall not indure to add Wickedneſſes to our Weakneſſes, nor Deliberate Preſumptuous Sins to thoſe of Infirmity. It will grieve us at *heart*, that we find our ſelves conſtrained to beg Pardon ſo often for Weakneſſes; ſo far ſhall we be from making through Wilfulneſs, or Careleſneſs, more work for Repentance.

Secondly, Conſider how Gracious God hath been to you, in continuing His *Reſtraining* Grace, whereby you have been kept from *Scandalous* Sins; whereas He hath had moſt juſt Provocations to leave you to *your ſelves*, in regard of your allowance of *ſecret* ones. Many fearful Examples there have been of *thoſe* who have been *thus* puniſh't, for their Hypocriſy and playing faſt-and-looſe with God; Obeying Him in *ſome* things, and making bold with Him in *others*: And 'tis Gods infinite Mercy that you are not *yet* in the Number of *ſuch* Examples.

While *any* Corrupt Affection is gratified by us, we are Prepared (as hath been ſhewed) to Cloſe with the very *worſt* of Temptations, when ſo ever we may be violently aſſaulted by them. Now it is only the good Providence and Grace of God, which hath *hitherto* kept off ſuch Temptations; and the *Wicked One* not flinging the moſt *fiery darts* he hath in his *Quiver* at us, is wholly to be imputed to the Divine Reſtraints: But how *ſoon* we may be Abandoned by the Divine Providence, to the Rage and Fury of that *Roaring Lyon, which goeth up and down ſeeking to devour us*, we cannot tell; but have Cauſe ſtill to be expecting ſo great a Judgment, while we refuſe to be *Intirely* God's Servants.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Let the partially Obedient Conſider, what unaccountable Folly and Madneſs it is, to Diſobey God in *any* thing. What can you ſay for your ſelves, why you ſhould obey Him but juſt *ſo far?*

Is there not the *ſame* Reaſon, why you ſhould be in *every* thing Obedient, that there is, why you ſhould be in *any* thing ſo? Is it moſt Reaſonable to Obey Him in *ſome* things, and is it *not ſo* to Obey Him in *all* things? Can we ſay that God goes *beyond* His Power in impoſing *ſome* Laws; or that *thoſe* we diſlike, are *leſs* Reaſonable than His *other* Laws? Surely we dare not admit *ſuch* a Thought.

Is it poſſible then, that we can think it *Fit* or *Tolerable*, that the great Creator and Governour of the World ſhould be in any thing *Diſobeyed?* Such a Worm as *thy ſelf* art highly offended with *thy* Servant, when he *willingly* diſobeys *thee*; and too often when he does ſo *againſt* his Will: But is *thy* Authority over *thy* Servant equal to God Almighty's over *thee?* Are the Obligations in which *he* ſtands to *thee*, like *thoſe* in which *thou* ſtandeſt to *God?* Or is there any Compariſon between *thoſe* Encouragements, thou art able to give

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thy Servant to pleaſe *thee*, and *thoſe* which God gives *thee* to pleaſe Him? Who would not think himſelf greatly Affronted, to have *ſuch* Queſtions ſeriouſly put to him?

And *this* minds me to Entreat you,

Fourthly, To Conſider what a Glorious Reward is aſſured to us, to Encourage us to Obey. It is called a *Crown of Righteouſneſs*, a *Crown of Life*, and a *Crown of Glory*. There are given to us, for this End, *exceeding great and precious Promiſes*, as St. *Peter* calls them. A Promiſe of *ſeeing God even as He is*: Of *being forever with our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*: Of *Beholding the Glory which the Father hath given Him*; and of *Partaking too of His own Glory*, and that *to all Eternity*: A Promiſe that *the Righteous ſhall ſhine forth like the Sun in the Kingdom of the Father*: Of their being Ἰσάγγελοι, *Equal with the Glorious Angels*: And of *having their Vile Bodies made like unto Chriſt's* moſt *Glorious Body*.

Which, and many other ſuch like, Promiſes our Lord Confirmed by *Innumerable Miracles, Wonders and Signs*; and *then* Sealed them with *His Blood*; and next, by *His Reſurrection from the Dead*, and *Aſcenſion into Heaven*: Whither

ther He declared He went, as the *Fore-runner* of His Obedient Disciples, *there to prepare a Place for them; that where He is, there they may be also.* And lastly, He Confirmed *these exceeding great and precious Promises*, by *sending the Holy Ghost*, according to His Promise before He left the World.

Now, who can have any worthy Sense of the *Reward* of Obedience, and think *much* of Obeying in any *one* Instance, tho' much *more* were required of him than there is? If the *Apostle* said of the *Sufferings of that Present Time*, (which were Extraordinary and Prodigious Ones, and especially *those* which *himself* underwent) *that they are not Worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us*; much *more* may this be said of the *Services* of this Life, of *all the Duties* to which our Creator and Redeemer have oblig'd us. And therefore,

Fifthly, Let it be likewise considered, that, as vastly great as the Reward of Obedience shall be, there is no more required of us under the Gospel Dispensation, than, all things considered, *needs* must. It may with the greatest Assurance be affirmed, that nothing is now commanded, but what is necessary to make

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us capable of the Glorious Inheritance purchaſed for us; or doth tend to the better *Inabling* us for thoſe Duties, which are of indiſpenſable Neceſſity to *this* End: And that nothing is Forbidden us, which doth not either *directly* or *conſequentially* tend to make us *unmeet* for that Inheritance. So that to complain of any one of our Lord's Precepts, is the ſame thing with finding fault with Him, for deſigning to make us *ſuch Happy* Creatures.

Sixthly, Conſider alſo, that the LAWS which are given us, as they are moſt neceſſary, ſo they are not ſo *many*, as that we need to be *ſcared* at them. Many are apt to think, that becauſe the *Bible* is a *Great Book*, the Divine LAWS are almoſt Numberleſs. But the *far greater* Part of the Bible conſiſts of *Hiſtory*, and *Relations of Matters of Fact*, and of *Pious Mens devout Prayers and Praiſes*, &c. And in the *Preceptive* Part, there are very many Laws which are Abrogated, and never concerned *Chriſtians*: And thoſe which are of *Force*, are many of them abundance of times Repeated and Inculcated.

In ſhort, our whole Duty may be brought into a very *Narrow* Compaſs. St. *Paul* reduceth

ceth it to *Three* Heads, *Sobriety*, *Righteouſneſs* and *Godlineſs*: And our Bleſſed *Saviour* to *Two*, The Love of *God*, and our *Neighbour*; and the particular Inſtances of each of theſe, are *eaſily* and *quickly* learn't. Nay they are generally *written in our Hearts*, as St. *Paul* tells us; *i. e.* are the plain Dictates of Natural Reaſon. *Rom.* 10. 8.

Seventhly, Let us farther Conſider, that there is ſo cloſe a Connexion between them all, that Obedience to *one* Law will inable us to obey *another*, and ſo on: And the Performance of *one* Duty, will prepare us for *another*, and make it eaſie to us. And on the *other* hand, the *Breach* of *one* Law will cauſe Careleſsneſs in keeping *other* Laws; and no Sin goes *alone*. So that 'tis but a bare *Suppoſition* in the Text, that *a Man may keep the Whole Law, and offend but in one Point*, or ſlight *one* Law, and obſerve all the reſt; for there can *really* be *no ſuch* thing; as is evident from what hath been now diſcourſed.

Eighthly, I may alſo add, that there is *no neceſſity* of being very ſolicitous, about any more than *one* thing, in order to our keeping God's Laws; and *that* is the Vigorouſly poſſeſſing our Souls with the *Love of God*. *This*,

ſaith St. *John*, *is the Love of God, that we keep His Commandments*, (or, this is a neceſſary expreſſion thereof) *and His Commandments are not grievous*: Namely to thoſe that *Love God.*

And what can we imagine ſo *Natural* to Creatures Capable of *underſtanding* God, as *Loving Him with all their hearts*, Conſidering the infinite Lovelineſs of His Nature, and the Inexpreſſible Obligations He hath laid upon them?

What ſo Agreeable to our Nature, as to love *Him* who is the Author of our *Being*, after whoſe Image we were made, who is the Centre of our Souls, and in whom *alone* conſiſteth our True Happineſs? And 'tis very eaſy to ſhew, that the Love of God will *naturally* draw after it, all thoſe duties which relate, either immediately to *Him*, or to our *Neighbour*, or to our *own Souls and Bodies.*

Now, Conſidering *theſe* things, well may God Almighty Expoſtulate with Partially Obedient Chriſtians, as once He did with *ſuch Jews*, and that with greater reaſon, *O my people, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee? Teſtify againſt me.* He hath been *indeed* ſo far from *wearying* us with His Impoſitions, that every good Chriſtian's Experience

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is able to Teſtify that the greateſt ſatisfaction, the trueſt ſelf-Enjoyment, ariſeth from the Obſervance of His Laws. Nor can it be *otherwiſe*, ſince *Love*, and the Love of *God*, is the *fulfilling of them*. For what ſo Pleaſant as *Love*, and much *more* as love placed on ſuch an Object as *God* is? We ought therefore to be ſo far from thinking *much* of yielding Obedience to *all* His Laws, that we are highly *diſingenuous*, if we be not heartily thankful to Him, for giving us ſo *few*, and thoſe *ſuch* as in Obedience to which conſiſts ſuch Pleaſure.

In the *laſt* place, and with *theſe* words I will Conclude, What a ſad thing, and miſerable diſappointment, muſt it needs be, to come *near* to the Kingdom of Heaven, and yet at laſt fall *ſhort* of it, for want of going a little *farther*?

May all Partially Obedient Profeſſors of Chriſtianity, Conſider *this* alſo, and lay it well to heart.

FINIS.